



NEWS RELEASE

West Virginia Department of Agriculture

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NEWS RELEASE
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WHAT FARMERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT STORM ASSISTANCE

Charleston, W.Va. – West Virginia farmers have suffered a brutal one-two punch over the past four months with the June 29 derecho storm and Superstorm Sandy on and around October 29.

“These are among some of the worst weather events I can remember, and they have created significant difficulties for West Virginia’s farmers,” said Commissioner of Agriculture Gus R. Douglass. “When it comes to helping those affected get back on their feet, it’s important for our decision-makers to not forget about those who are producing the food we all rely on.”

It’s also important for farmers to thoroughly document damage to their farm and non-farm property and submit that information to the proper agencies. Farm-related damages should be reported to local Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices, as well as county Emergency Management Agencies (EMA). Farmers should report non-farm-related damage to their local EMAs.

A list of EMA phone numbers by county can be found at Governor Earl Ray Tomblin’s website at www.governor.wv.gov/pages/CountyEmergencyManagementOffices.aspx.

“While it’s likely that most farm-related assistance will come through the USDA and FSA, it’s important that EMAs have a total accounting of all damages so that they can pass along the most thorough estimates to The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). That can really help influence the overall aid targeted at a particular area,” said Commissioner Douglass.

Individuals with damage should take photos and keep all receipts, documents and records, whether or not an assistance program is currently in place. Future legislation might grant aid retroactively, Commissioner Douglass noted.

Aid is now available for losses related to June’s wind storm, according to West Virginia FSA Director Alfred Lewis. FSA is accepting emergency loan applications from farmers who can show damage to farm structures or livestock losses related to the June 29 derecho storm.

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In addition, specific central West Virginia counties are eligible for cost-share on removal of field debris under the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP). The program will pay up to 75 percent of the cost of removing trees and related debris from fields. Not enough fence losses were reported for fence repair to be included in the program. Given the nature of the storm, most of the posts and wire along tree lines remained in place and simply needed to be tacked back up where damaged, according to FSA.

Counties included in the ECP derecho program are Lewis, Upshur, Gilmer, Calhoun, Braxton, Clay, Nicholas, Webster and Roane. Areas along Mill Run in Wood, Ritchie, Wirt and Pleasants Counties have been submitted to Washington, but have not yet been approved.

Neither FSA nor FEMA has announced any assistance related to the October superstorm. FSA and local emergency offices continue to gather data on damage.

Preliminarily, FSA reports substantial debris issues, as well as widespread losses of crops that were still in the field when Sandy hit, including corn, potatoes, soybeans, buckwheat and alfalfa. There are also reports of structural damage to many farm buildings as a result of the feet of wet heavy snow that Sandy dropped on many of West Virginia's rural areas.

While reports of livestock losses are low at the moment, the condition of some animals remains unknown. Some farmers are still unable to reach remote, snow-covered pastures where animals presumably remain trapped without food.

There has also been no solid assessment on losses to the state's timber industry. Division of Forestry employees have been busy with cleanup, although substantial losses are expected.

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The West Virginia Department of Agriculture protects plant, animal and human health through a variety of scientific, regulatory and consumer protection programs, as mandated by state law. The Commissioner of Agriculture is one of six statewide elected officials in West Virginia. For more information, visit www.wvagriculture.org.

"The Basis of All Wealth is Agriculture."